

NEWS RELEASE

**U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Mountain-Prairie Region
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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to Initiate Status Review of the Ute Ladies'-Tresses Orchid

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has determined that a petition to remove the Ute ladies'-tresses orchid from Federal protection under the Endangered Species Act provides substantial biological information to indicate that removal may be warranted.

Consequently, the Service will initiate a status review to assess the Ute ladies'-tresses orchid population abundance and distribution, recovery progress, and existing threats. Upon conclusion of the status review, the Service will issue a finding regarding whether the orchid should remain listed or should be proposed for delisting.

"This is the first step in a thorough review of the status of the species," said Ralph Morgenweck, the Service's Director of the Mountain-Prairie Region. "Our review will consist of all available scientific information, including additional information submitted by other government agencies, scientists, and the public."

The petition from the Central Utah Water Conservancy District states that there is substantial new information indicating that the population size and distribution is much larger than known at the time of listing, there is more information on life history and habitat needs allowing better management, and that threats are not as great in magnitude or imminence as understood at the time of listing.

Ute ladies'-tresses orchid is a perennial, terrestrial orchid with stems 8 to 20 inches tall with small white or ivory flowers clustered into a spike at the top of the stem. It blooms from late July through August. The orchid occurs along riparian edges, gravel bars, old oxbows, high flow channels, and meadows along perennial streams. Populations of Ute ladies'-tresses orchids are known from three broad general areas: near the base of the eastern slope of the Rocky Mountains in southeastern Wyoming and adjacent Nebraska and north-central and central Colorado; in the upper Colorado River basin, particularly in Utah's Uinta Basin; and in the Bonneville Basin along the Wasatch Front and westward in the eastern Great Basin, in north-central and western Utah, extreme eastern Nevada, and southeastern Idaho. The orchid has also been discovered in southwestern Montana and in the Okanogan area and along the Columbia River in north-central Washington.

Information is available for public review, by appointment, during normal business hours at the Fish and Wildlife Service's ecological services office located at 2369 West Orton Circle, Suite 50, West Valley City, Utah 84119 (801) 975-3330. It will also be posted on the Service's website:

<http://mountain-prairie.fws.gov/species/plants/uteladiestress>

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 542 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resource offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces Federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Aid program that distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

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